

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

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AMCONSUL MADRAS

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 6735

FROM AGATT PASS AGRICULTURE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, IN

SUBJECT: REPORT ON FOOD SITUATION IN EASTERN INDIA

REF: A. STATE 113884

B. CALCUTTA 1080

SUMMARY: EASTERN INDIA IS ALWAYS HUNGRY. WE THINK MAY 15 NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE EXAGGERATES CURRENT OVERALL SITUATION, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE UNDOUBTEDLY AREAS OF ACUTE DISTRESS. END SUMMARY.

1. TOTAL FOODGRAIN PRODUCTION IN THE MAJOR EAST INDIAN STATES OF BIHAR, WEST BENGAL, ORISSA, AND ASSAM DURING 1974-75 IS ESTIMATED BY THE EMBASSY TO BE UP SLIGHTLY OVER 1973-74. BIHAR'S AND WEST BENGAL'S PRODUCTION IS EXPECTED TO BE UP 700 TO 900 THOUSAND TONS EACH, WHILE ASSAM MAY BE DOWN marginally. ORISSA'S PRODUCTION, HOWEVER, IS EXPECTED TO BE DOWN BY ROUGHLY 1.2 MILLION TONS OR SLIGHTLY OVER 20 PERCENT DUE TO LAST SUMMER'S POOR MONSOON.

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2. EASTERN INDIA HAS GENERALLY BEEN A LARGE DEFICIT AREA FOR

FOOD-GRAINS. THE INCREASING POPULATION IS ALWAYS COMPETING FOR THE LIMITED SUPPLIES OF FOODGRAINS AVAILABLE FROM INDIGENOUS PRODUCTION AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SUPPLIES. TOTAL FOODGRAIN PRODUCTION IN BIHAR, WEST BENGAL, ORISSA, AND ASSAM HAS BEEN ON A PLATEAU FOR THE LAST SEVEN YEARS, RANGING FROM APPROXIMATELY 22-24 MILLION METRIC TONS WHILE POPULATION IN THE INDIVIDUAL STATES HAS BEEN INCREASING TWO TO THREE PERCENT ANNUALLY.

3. THE FOODGRAIN SITUATION IN MANY AREAS OF EASTERN INDIA EASED SOMEWHAT DURING THE WINTER MONTHS WITH THE HARVESTING OF THE KHARIF CROPS (FALL/EARLY WINTER-HARVESTED) WHICH PROVIDE THE BULK OF THE AREA'S FOODGRAIN PRODUCTION. THE FOODGRAIN SITUATION, HOWEVER, IS EXPECTED TO PROGRESSIVELY TIGHTEN FROM NOW UNTIL THE NEXT KHARIF HARVEST. NORMALLY THE LEANEST MONTHS ARE JULY, AUGUST, AND SEPTEMBER. FAILURE OF RAINS DURING THE COMING MONSOON SEASON WILL CAUSE EVEN GREATER HARDSHIPS AMONG THE VULNERABLE SECTIONS OF THE LOCAL POPULACE AND CREATE INCREASED PRESSURE FOR SUPPLIES FROM THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT.

4. IN EASTERN INDIA, THE MAJOR FOODGRAIN DEFICIT STATE IS WEST BENGAL, FOLLOWED BY BIHAR. ORISSA IS GENERALLY marginally SURPLUS WHILE ASSAM IS GENERALLY marginally DEFICIT. THIS YEAR ORISSA HAS ALSO MOVED INTO THE DEFICIT CATEGORY. RECENTLY THERE HAS BEEN SOME MARGINAL INCREASE IN THE AMOUNT OF FOODGRAINS DISTRIBUTED THROUGH THE PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM (MOSTLY TO THE FIAR PRICE SHOPS) IN ORISSA AND ASSAM. LARGELY BECAUSE OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE J.P. MOVEMENT, BIHAR HAS ALSO RECEIVED INCREASED FOODGRAIN SUPPLIES FROM THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. THE PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM IN THE TWO NORMALLY LARGEST DEFICIT STATES OF WEST BENGAL AND BIHAR DEPENDS PRIMARILY ON SUPPLIES FROM THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT WITH PROCUREMENT IN THESE TWO STATES GENERALLY ACCOUNTING FOR NOT MORE THAN 10-20 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL AMOUNT DISTRIBUTED BY THE STATE GOVERNMENTS. WITH THE UPCOMING PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT MAY TRY TO MEET MORE OF EASTERN INDIA'S FOODGRAIN NEEDS.

5. IN THE FUTURE, EASTERN INDIA IS GOING TO HAVE TO INCREASE FOOD-GRAIN PRODUCTION OR RECEIVE EVER GREATER SUPPLIES FROM THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OR LEARN TO GET BY WITH EVEN LESS. WE ARE REPEATING CALCUTTA 1080 WHICH GIVES ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON UNCLASSIFIED

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THE FOOD SITUATION IN EASTERN INDIA. THE MOST RECENT ANALYSIS OF THE OVERALL INDIAN FOODGRAIN SITUATION IS CONTAINED IN IN-5022 DATED MAY 5.SCHNEIDER

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